

ABSTRACT

A method and apparatus for organizing and processing pieces of interrelated information (or "thoughts") using a digital computer is disclosed. The invention employs a graphical user interface to facilitate user interaction with highly flexible, associative "matrices" that enable users conveniently to organize digitally-stored thoughts and their network of interrelationships. Each of the thoughts may be affiliated with one or more application programs, such as a word processing or spreadsheet utility, or an Internet browser. Users are able conveniently to select a current thought along with any applications or content associated with that thought by interacting with the graphical representation. That representation is automatically reoriented about the selected thought, and is revised to reflect only those thoughts having predetermined relations to that current thought. Users can easily modify the matrix by interactively redefining relations between thoughts. Further aspects of the invention include techniques permitting automated generation of thought matrices, delayed loading to facilitate navigation amongst thoughts without undue delay due to bandwidth constraints, and matrix division and linking to allow optimal data structure flexibility. The present invention is interoperable with computer networks including the Internet, and offers an intuitive scalable methodology for the navigation and management of essentially immeasurable information resources and knowledge bases that transcends the limitations inherent in traditional hierarchical approaches. Thought matrices may conveniently be published and shared by multiple users under another aspect of the present invention. Still another aspect enhances communications amongst computer network users by sharing information about users' navigation amongst shared thoughts. The present invention offers advantages over prior art methods when speech is used to control a computer. Lastly, another aspect of the present

